

MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

LTC#

538-2023

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Honorable Steven Meiner and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Rafael E. Granado, City Clerk

DATE: December 05, 2023

SUBJECT: **Motion from the Police/Citizens Relations Committee's November 6, 2023 Hybrid Meeting**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to inform the Mayor and Commission of a motion made by the Police/Citizens Relations Committee at their November 6, 2023, Hybrid Meeting.

BACKGROUND

In the Spring of 2024, the Police/Citizens Relations Committee (PCRC) sent an LTC strongly encouraging the City Commission to create a task force or committee to address how the City handles the concerns raised during the month of March in the Art Deco Cultural District (ADCD), not so affectionately dubbed "Spring Break". Supported by Commissioner Dominguez, the previous City Commission tasked the PCRC with the responsibility of addressing the concerns. As such, the PCRC created a subcommittee to discuss and come up with recommendations. The included document is the deliverable of the first phase of the subcommittee.

The recommendations are derived from the input from members of the PCRC, local businesses and other key stakeholders with overwhelmingly positive feedback. It is the Committee's hope that the Commission accepts and embraces them, and that they are a valuable tool in handling some of the urgent concerns expected to be raised, yet again, during Spring Break.

MOTION

Members present: Chairman Seth Feuer, Mark Brill (V), Lisa Cole, Alexander Fryd (V), Joanna Kravitz, Lisette Lopez, Michael McManus, Jill Shockett

Members absent: Vice Chair Daniel Aronson, Christine Klingspor, Moshe Rothman, Mark Weithorn, Samuel Rabin

The Miami Beach Police/Citizens Relations Committee makes a motion to ratify and send the Spring Break Short Term Recommendation to the City Commission.

Motion made by: Michael McManus

Seconded by: Lisette Lopez

Motion passage: Unanimously, 8-0

REG:WAJ:cmrp

SHORT TERM DELIVERABLES - MARCH 2024

PLANNING

- Having a different plan every year is confusing. Furthermore, it strongly suggests there is no long term strategy for dealing with the issues at hand. We recognize steps are in place and substantial actions have been taken that are already focusing on this
- It also goes without saying that shutting down the City is something that we must avoid at all costs when possible
 - **Recommendations**
 - The PCR simply recommends that in the future, the plans ratified this year be amended and lessons learned be incorporated as needed, versus implementing different plans every year. Messaging is everything, so avoiding the introduction of new plans in future years will be valuable with our positive messaging efforts
 - The PCR urges the Commission to work with the City Manager to do everything within their powers to avoid having to declare an emergency, as it is just not good for the City at large. The PCR highlights the importance of fortifying the High Impact Ordinance in such a way that it minimizes the likelihood the City Manager will need to implement emergency measures in the future

COMMISSION MEETINGS

- Emergency Commission Meetings during the high profile events become a conduit for the media and others to laser focus on the issue during this timeframe. These should and likely could be avoided
- Furthermore, during an Emergency Commission Meeting In March 2023, The City Commission went against the City Manager and Chief of Police's recommendation of shutting down the City at the tail end of spring break. This was a public decision and was being captured by the media for broadcasting as the decision was made
- The City Commission and Administration clearly cares deeply about what is transpiring and addressing just that. This is clearly evident through the difficult conversations and decisions they take on during such times. That said, and with all due respect; City Leadership not being on the same page sends out a negative message to its residents, businesses, tourists, employees, and future visitors. Furthermore, if a negative outcome transpires as a result of the Administration's recommendations, the responsibility of such decisions then can fall on the Commission rather than the Administration
 - **Recommendations**
 - By setting a meeting schedule in advance in place of Emergency Commission Meetings, the concerns can be discussed in a lower profile manner and decisions made there from. Any needed adjustments for the spring break time period might be considered as a planning tool, versus a reactionary emergency commission meeting while the atmosphere is so heated. This would be a business as usual meeting. This minimizes the likelihood of attracting those wanting to broadcast any less than optimal hot button topic being discussed to the conversation as it's happening

- Focus the responsibility of decisions such as this on the City Administration during these high profile times. We have highly capable professionals in these positions. If they are not performing accordingly, then that should be handled outside of the spring break period that commands so much attention while in a heated atmosphere

COMMUNICATIONS

- It is worth noting that there are about five days each year that become highly problematic and high profile during the spring break period. Through education and communication to residents, businesses, and employees of the businesses on Miami Beach, there is an opportunity to change the perception of these stakeholders of what is truly transpiring, highlighting the concerns at hand while also celebrating the many successes and great things going on in Miami Beach at large
 - **Recommendation**
 - The PCR suggests not losing sight of the ball, letting the tail wag the dog. Through the handful of days we experience more significant issues, the focus should be on the many positive messages this amazing city can tell
- The City does an excellent job with Communications at large. The PCR has discussed ways in which communications can be enhanced and broadcast more widely, and we have come up with the following:
 - **Recommendations - Regular Communications**
 - Dedicate one page each quarter in the Miami Beach Magazine to the MBPD. On the page(s):
 - Focus on the MBPD and highlight the different departments within it
 - Illustrate the many successes and wins of the department
 - A strategic set of statistics can be broadcast each month that will facilitate residents having a better understanding of the true state of crimes happening in Miami Beach, facilitating a more positive perception of safety
 - These messages starting in January can focus on managing expectations on what to expect in March
 - Regular Communications from the MBPD
 - Have an MBPD e-newsletter with the same info from above, though it can include more regular statistics and topics relevant specifically to them in a more timely manner
 - This can be sent more frequently in preparation of and during the spring break period
 - **Recommendations - February & Preparing Constituents for March**
 - Create an awareness campaign for what to expect in March 2024, and broadcast it via:
 - Miami Beach Magazine - Two page spread on statistics, preparation for the spring break period, and working positive messaging about it whilst also giving readers info on whom to contact with any concerns or issues

- Neighborhood Association Meetings. Focus on the messaging in January, and augmenting them in February, more about what to expect, how to react, etc.
 - Captains and Neighborhood Resource Officers can speak at neighborhood association meetings as we approach Spring Break to get out customized message for their sections of the city to get the best possible messaging out
 - Enhance programs like the ads on trolleys, Miami Beach Magazine, etc.
 - Videos & Social Media campaigns highlighting the MBPD in action and success stories and how the MBPD works so hard for the CMB
 - Using organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Bureau, The Beach Channel, Hotel Association, GMCVB, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, BID's, etc.
 - Conversations with the Chief, Command Staff, long time officers when and were possible through these different organizations. With the understanding that their time becomes very critical and not abundant during the spring break period
- **Recommendations - March / Spring Break**
 - Establish a formal internal operations and communications center for the duration of the spring break period, components to be identified by the City Manager's office
 - This center could have a director to oversee and coordinate operations whilst it is in existence
 - This could include key staff from the City Manager's office and key departments, such as the MBPD, Communications & Tourism, etc.
 - Establish a point person for the press similar to above that are agile and able to address the pointed questions the City may get from them while answering with positive messaging to neutralize hot button topics
 - Create a hotline if deemed fit to respond to the concerns of our residents, businesses, employees, tourists, visitors, etc.
 - Establish a protocol for the Mayor's office and City Commission for handling communications with the press. While this is a far reach, ideally elected officials not speaking with the press on hot button issues serves the City better, and we encourage them to only speak on positive messages from the City. Elected officials messaging can be serious but positive. We suggest considering any hot button issues be directed to the contact that handles the press in order for the messages delivered to be as positive and proactive as possible, enhancing the Miami Beach image and brand

- Consider holding a communications / public relations workshop for anyone who will be approached by the press in best practices for addressing questions

SHORT TERM RENTALS

- We recognize that the City Administration has made significant strides in addressing the daily rentals of private properties (vis-a-vis Air BnB and other similar programs)
 - **Recommendation** - We encourage the Administration to continue to assign as many resources as possible in identifying such properties, as it goes without saying, that are a considerable contributor to the concerns at hand.

***Note:** At time of the meeting to ratify these recommendations, there are plans in place for March 2024 that are still being finalized. That said, we will have a new Mayor and three new City Commissioners in November/December of this year. This will have an impact on the plans and direction of the City for March 2024*